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ABSTRACT

While overall, more than 20% of youths are unemployed, more than 50% of minority youths are unemployed. To examine the demographic characteristics of successful and unsuccessful enrollees at the Southwestern Job Corps Center, 125 youths (85 classified as successful, 40 classified as unsuccessful based on their status 9 months after data collection) were administered a 57-item bibliographic questionnaire covering ten areas including school, work, self-concept, and family relations. An analysis of the results showed that ethnicity significantly distinguished successful from unsuccessful trainees. Specifically, the oriental subjects (Vietnam refugees) were 100% successful, the European-Americans were 71% successful, Blacks 67% successful, Mexican-Americans 58% successful, and native Americans 52% successful. Being born out of the region, estimating a long stay in the program, and having been in school or work immediately prior to training were associated with success. The discriminate function analysis significantly discriminated group membership 86% of the time, with the variables of age, ethnicity, level of schooling, and number of siblings providing the highest coefficients. The findings suggest that the Job Corps program does well with individuals with certain characteristics, and must find ways to reach the almost 50% who presently don't benefit from the program. (Author/BL)

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Factors predicting success of underprivileged youths in Job Corps training

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Abstract

This study investigated demographic characteristics associated with successful completion or early termination of Job Corp Training. The subjects were 125 Job Corp enrollees. All were administered a 57 item bibliographic questionnaire covering 10 areas including school, work, self-concept, and family relations. The subjects were classified according to Job Corp classifications of success: 85 were in the success group and 40 in the unsuccessful group. Each questionnaire variable was compared by ANOVA for the two groups, and a multivariant discriminative function analysis was done. The bibliographic items which significantly distinguished successful from unsuccessful trainee groups largely had to do with ethnicity. The Oriental subjects (Vietnam refugees) were 100% successful, the European-Americans were 71% successful, Blacks 67%, Mexican-American 58% and native Americans 52%. Being born out of the region, estimating a long stay in the program, and having been in school or work immediately prior to training were associated with success. The discriminate function analysis significantly discriminated group membership 86% correct, with the variables of age, ethnicity, level of schooling and number of sibling providing the highest coefficients. It would appear that cultural values, recent refugee status and family factors were associated with the highest degree of success.

Factors predicting success of underprivileged youths in Job Corps training

The unemployment rate for youth aged 16-19 years, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, in recent years has run overall more than 20%. For minority youth, however, the figure is more than double, running closer to 50%. Levitan and Taggart (1971) designated a credentials gap between Caucasian youths and their minority counterparts as a prime reason for the great disparity in their employment patterns. A direct relationship has often been described between schooling and employment opportunities and income (Kahn, 1973). The severity of the social and economic consequences of the school dropout problem runs has led to several attempts at a solution.

The Job Corps is a program aimed at dealing with the school dropout problem by providing job training to those who have already left school. The Job Corps was an OEO program established in 1964. It is largely residential, aimed to move the members, at least temporarily, from what is usually impoverished housing conditions, to dormitory facilities at the centers. Counselors and residential advisors are provided to deal with the emotional problems of the transition. The educational component provides compulsory reading and mathematic courses. Other courses include health education, cultural awareness, home and family life, and driver education. English as a secondary language is available and

preparation for the GED is also provided. The vocational training varies according to the job market in the area of the program. Also, medical, dental and nutritional components are provided. Job Corps members receive a monthly allowance and are entitled to placement services and readjustment funds if they remain enrolled in the program for at least 90 days.

Three types of termination are designated by the Job Corps. Category 1 are those who have completed the program designated for them in its entirety. All programs are individually tailored and the time involved may be between 9 months to 2 years. The second category includes those who have remained enrolled for at least 90 days, but leave before completion. They are, however, considered completers of the Job Corps program based on the increment of their marketable skills as a result of having been in the program. The final category, Category 3, includes those who leave before 90 days. It is of note that approximately 50% of all enrollees do leave in less than 90 days and are considered failures in the program.

This study focused on a relatively new Job Corps Center in the Southwest U.S. which, during its first year of operation, had over 200 enrollees, 53% of whom were male, 47% female. Ethnically, about 42% were Hispanic, about 30% Caucasian, 12% Native American, 8% Black, and 8% others. During the first year, 33% completed their program as planned, 27% remained at least 90

days, although did not complete everything, and 40% left prior to completing the 90 days.

The basic data for this study was obtained from biographical information. This method has been widely used in various predictive studies, as has been pointed out by Owens (1976) and others. The Job Corps in 1970 contracted to have a biographical information blank developed for the purpose of determining the probability of new enrollees staying in the Job Corps for at least 90 days. Using this form, Gallagher (1976) provided for some data associated with ethnic and other factors and length of stay. Various Job Corps demographic background studies have shown that Blacks had a higher disciplinary discharge rate than Whites, Whites were prone to leave because of "too many Negroes in the Center," and women to stay longer and to adjust to the programs better than males. Younger individuals have less success than older ones, and that dropouts tend to have more dependence on their parents and are more likely to leave because of homesickness. Thus, those who came from more stable home environments were more likely to drop out than those who came from less stable environments.

The present study examined some social personal background characteristics of successful and unsuccessful enrollees at the Southwestern Job Corps Center. This Center is co-educational. Ethnically, the population serves primarily Caucasian and

Mexican-American with a low percentage of Blacks and Native Americans.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 98 current male and female corps members enrolled in the Center for over 90 days, and 27 male and female former Corps members who had remained enrolled for less than 90 days. Table 1 summarizes age, sex, ethnicity and category of termination.

Table 1 about here

Instrument

A modification of the Job Corps biographic information blank was used. Likert type scales, open-ended questions and fixed alternatives are all included as answer options depending upon the item. The modified scale consisted of 57 items, each of which related to one or more of the following categories: (1) work and school, (2) self-concept, (3) peer relationships, (4) family relationsihps, (5) socio-economic indicators, (6) behavioral indicators of social adjustment, (7) age, (8) ethnicity, (9) sex, and (10) place of residence.

Procedure

The modified scale was administered to the 98 currently

enrolled corps members in groups of about 25 over a 4 day period. The former Corps members were also administered to the scale in groups upon being invited to return to the Center for that general purpose.

Nine months after the original collection of data, a records review was done to assign the status at that point of the 98 subjects who have taken the scale as current Job Corps enrollees. These individuals together with the dropout group comprise the five subgroups designated in Table 1. Groups A, B, and C were considered successful Corps members, and groups D and E were considered unsuccessful.

Statistical Analysis

Each of the 59 biographic variables were analyzed by univariate ANOVA or Chi Square. Multivariate discriminate function analyses were performed on successful subjects (Subgroup A, B, and C) and unsuccessful subjects (Subgroup D and E) using the 59 biographic items as variables.

Results

Four of the 26 non-continuous biographic items were statistically significant. These were: (1) place of birth, with being born outside of the Southwest associatd with successful outcome. The data show that 23 out of 24 (96%) foreign born Corps members and 23 out of 32 (72%) Corps members born in other areas of the United States were in the most successful group. This

contrast to rates of 62% success for those born in the immediate locale, and 50% for those born in the Southwest area.

Answers to "What were you doing just immediately before enrolling in the Job Corps?," indicated that those who were engaged in a structured activity just before enrolling tended to be most successful. Those who had been working or in school were very likely to be in the successful Group 1, while those who indicated that they were not in those activities before enrolling, had a high probability of being in the unsuccessful designation. The last item here was that of ethnic background. Ethnicity was significantly linked to success, chi square $X^2 = 17$, p. .004. All 20 Oriental subjects (100%) were in the successful group. Of 38 Caucasian subjects, 71% were successful; of 9 Black subjects, 67% were successful; of 43 Mexican-American subjects, the success rate was 58%; while 54% of the Native Americans were successful. A further differentiating item was that of whether or not the trainees would have liked the center to have been farther from their home. Interestingly, the unsuccessful subjects were those who were most likely to endorse wanting to be the center to be farther from their home.

Two items of the 28 continuous variable items significantly differentiated the successful from unsuccessful trainees. The least time subjects lived at the location just prior to coming into the Job Corps were more successful. This is, however,

probably related to the factors of ethnicity in that the Orientals were Vietnam refugees recently having arrived in the United States. However, the trend also held for those born in the local area, who were less successful than those who had migrated in. The other item here was that the successful trainees were more likely to estimate a longer period of time necessary for training than were the unsuccessful trainees.

Discriminate Function Analysis of the Modified Job Corps Biographic Questionnaire

Fifty-four of the fifty-nine items of the questionnaire were analyzed in a discriminate function analysis. The results are indicated in Table 2. The procedure significantly separated the successful and unsuccessful groups ($x_2 = 65.46$, $p > .001$). The analysis correctly classified 86% of the subjects in their respective successful or unsuccessful group. The items which pulled the highest discriminative coefficients in the stepwise function were age, with the youngest Corps members being the least successful, and the older ones being the more successful; grade at which an individual had left school, with the most successful Corps members being the ones who had completed the most years of school; ethnicity, with Oriental heritage being associated with success to a much higher degree than any of the other ethnic groups. Next was number of siblings with the larger families being associated with the greatest success. Lastly was how often

homesickness was experienced while in the Job Corps. Higher frequency of homesickness was associated with unsuccesful results.

Table II about here

Discussion

The results demonstrate that certain biographic background factors are associated with success or nonsuccess in the Job Corps training program. While only 6 of the 54 items significantly differentiated the groups at a level of statistical significance, this is at a level beyond what would be expected by chance. The nature of the differences are consistent with other findings with Job Corps members. Nonetheless, a cross-validation of these findings on another sample is important before these results can be considered to be statistically reliable findings.

The factors developed here suggest that being born outside of the Southwest area is a strong predictor of success. This is, however, largely accounted for by the fact that the most successful trainees were recent immigrants to the country and area, although the data also suggest that others who migrated in tend to do better than whose who were born and lived their lives in the immediate area. Being engaged in a structured and socially desireable activity such as school or work just prior to entering the Center was associated with success as compared to not being

engaged in "meaningful" activities.

Ethnicity as predictor of success has already been alluded to. The Oriental subjects were 100% successful. This is very consistent with a number of recent reports of a high degree of academic achievement among the Vietnamese refugees. Of the other ethnic groups represented in the population here, 71% of the Caucasian group who were also not native to the area, were in the successful group, as compared to 58% of the Mexican-American group who were native. The sample of Blacks and Native Americans was really too small for making a comparison, although their success rate was somewhat under that of the Mexican-American group.

The discriminate function analysis did show that these biographic variables do significantly discriminate group membership even though individual items are not necessarily significant. Again, the need for a cross-validation item weightings is necessary in order for those items to be considered statistically reliable predictive variables and weights.

In general, these findings are supportive of a pattern of characteristics that have been found associated with success or nonsuccess in the endeavor to help youth find meaningful employment and role in society (Gallagher, 1976). It would appear that the factors associated with success are orientation and value as suggested by the total success rate of the Vietnam trainees, being somewhat older and having performed in school or at work

rather than having been idle prior to entrance in the Job Corps. These all suggest that those with the most favorable history of past functioning are most likely to be the most successful. That is a familiar finding, one that has been noted in prognosis for recovery of psychological disorders, and in predictions of success in psychotherapy.

The challenge from these results lies not in screening out those who are least likely to benefit from the program, but rather in recognizing that the program does well with individuals with certain characteristics and needs to find ways and means for reaching those (almost 50%) who at present don't achieve as much benefit. That may call for other or different intervention strategies.

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Table 1

Subject Characteristics

AGE:	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
No. of Ss:	3	27	28	25	22	14	5	1

SEX:	MALE	FEMALE
No. of Ss:	59	66

ETHNICITY:	Oriental	Anglo	Native-American	Mexican-American	Black	Other
No. of Ss:	20	38	13	43	9	2

	GROUP I			GROUP II	
*STATUS:	A	B	C	D	E
No. of Ss:	45	13	27	13	27

* STATUS: A = Level I Corpsmembers: Graduated and holding a job 9 months later

B = Level I Corpsmembers: Graduated, but no job 9 months later

C = Still enrolled 9 months later

D = Level II Corpsmembers: Left after 90 days, but before completing

E = Level III Corpsmembers: Left before 90 days

Table 2

Discriminant Analysis Using 54 items as variables

Canonical Discriminant Functions

Eigen Value	Canonical Correlation	Wilks Lambda	Chi-Square	d.f.	Significance
.79	.66	.56	65.46	21	.0001

Group Centroids

Group	Function 1
I	.60
II	-1.28

Classification Results

	Actual Group	N	Predicted Group Membership*	
			I	II
Group	I	85	75	10
Group	II	40	8	32

* Percent of cases correctly classified: 85.6